

Name: **Willow Creek WY-030-14N96W36-2012**

**FORM 1**

**Documentation of BLM Wilderness Inventory Findings on Record**

**1. Is there existing BLM wilderness inventory information on all or part of this area?**

No X Yes \_\_\_\_\_ (if yes, and if more than one area is within the area, list the names of those areas):

**a) Inventory Source:** \_\_\_\_\_

**b) Inventory Area Name(s)/Number(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**c) Map Name(s)/Number(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**d) BLM District (s)/Field Office(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. BLM Inventory Finds on Record:**

Existing inventory information regarding wilderness characteristics (if more than one BLM inventory area is associated with the area, list each area and answer each question individually for each inventory area):

Inventory Source:

## **FORM 2**

### **Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics**

a. Area Number/Name **Willow Creek WY-030-14N96W36-2012** Acreage 11841.52

(1) Is the area of sufficient size?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Describe the boundaries of the area (roads, property lines, etc.). If the area meets one of the exceptions to the size criterion, check “Yes” and describe the exception. If more than one inventory area is involved, list the acres in each and evaluate each area/sub-area separately. In completing steps (1) – (5), use additional space as necessary.

The unit is bound on the north, west, and northwest by three, Class 3 Light Duty, well roads, with aggregate surface maintained by industry. The unit is bound on the east by BLM 3319 a.k.a. Adobe Town Rd., a Class 3 Light Duty, well road, with aggregate surface maintained by industry. The unit is also bound on the east by an unnamed Class 3 Light Duty, well road, with aggregate surface maintained by industry. The unit is bound on the south by BLM 3318 a.k.a. Shell Creek Truck Trail Rd., a Class 3 Light Duty, well road, with aggregate surface maintained by the BLM.

DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT CONDITIONS: The Willow Creek area under consideration is 11841.52 acres of BLM public land. It is located within the following townships:

TOWNSHIP	RANGE	SECTION	TOWNSHIP	RANGE	SECTION
t13n	r95w	20	t13n	r95w	5
t13n	r95w	19	t13n	r95w	6
t13n	r96w	24	t13n	r96w	1
t13n	r96w	23	t13n	r96w	2
t13n	r95w	17	t13n	r96w	3
t13n	r95w	18	t14n	r95w	33
t13n	r96w	13	t14n	r95w	32
t13n	r96w	14	t14n	r95w	31
t13n	r96w	15	t14n	r96w	36
t13n	r96w	16	t14n	r96w	35
t13n	r95w	9	t14n	r95w	29
t13n	r95w	8	t14n	r95w	30
t13n	r95w	7	t14n	r96w	25
t13n	r96w	12	t14n	r96w	26
t13n	r96w	11	t14n	r95w	20
t13n	r96w	10	t14n	r95w	19
t13n	r95w	4	t14n	r96w	24

The dominant vegetation cover is sagebrush-grassland. The primary land uses are for oil & gas exploration and livestock grazing. The primary, dispersed recreational activities in the area are hunting and hiking.

(2) Does the area appear to be natural?

Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A ☐

Description: The 1.70 miles of primitive routes (i.e., unimproved roads and two-track trails) and 4.64 miles of wilderness inventory roads (i.e., well access roads) detract from the unit's naturalness. Examples of these primitive routes and wilderness inventory roads are demonstrated in photos 1-10. When hiking across the Willow Creek Unit, the casual observer cannot escape the constant view of primitive routes. These primitive routes create noticeable linear intrusions and disturbances that interrupt the experience of any wilderness character briefly encountered in areas untrammelled by the works of man.

The area contains eleven oil and gas wells throughout the Willow Creek Unit (see locations in unit map and examples in Photos 11-19). These oil and gas installations within the unit represent permanent improvements and loss of primeval character. When examining the status of the oil and gas wells, three of these wells are flowing, two are shut-in, two are permanently abandoned, and four have expired permits. Despite the variation in status, these wells remain as existing installations that detract from the naturalness and are substantially noticeable to the casual observer while hiking through the unit. All wells, which are not abandoned, are managed as active wells and receive commercial vehicle traffic for periodic maintenance. This traffic would interrupt the casual observer's experience of wilderness character due to road dust plumes and the contrast between the white coloration of these vehicles moving across the tan, brown, and olive landscape. Well pads do not receive final reclamation approval until they have been plugged and abandoned. Visual contrasts created by surface disturbances, including well pad turn-arounds, soil exposure around the facilities, and a rectangular area of wheat grass, remain until final reclamation is established.

The Willow Creek Unit also contains seven man-made reservoirs (see locations on unit map). When the casual observer encounters these man-made borrow pits and impounded reservoirs, the linear and textual contrast on the landscape attracts the attention of the observer to this modification constructed with mechanized equipment.

The casual observer is often attracted to bodies of water while hiking. Water adds interest and diversity to the landscape. When arriving at any of the seven reservoirs, the casual observer would notice that it is not a natural lake and that they have encountered an impounded, muddy borrow pit surrounded with dikes. The hiker seeking refreshment from clean water, would quickly notice that this "reservoir" is designed for cattle operations where the water is unfit for human consumption or swimming. The numerous range improvements, including the seven reservoirs and one water well, were constructed, primarily, for commercial grazing operations. These improvements give the casual observer a perception that they are visitors to a cattle range

rather than a wilderness untrammelled by the works of man. While the presence of cattle is compatible with a natural landscape for wilderness inventory purposes, the noticeable presence of numerous grazing-related developments in this unit is not.

In sum, the cumulative impacts on naturalness including the numerous oil and gas wells, primitive routes, wilderness inventory roads, and permanent range improvements have impaired the naturalness in the Willow Creek Unit to a level that is incompatible with the definitions of wilderness provided in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (incorporated in FLPMA 1976):

**A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.**

(3) Does the area or the remainder of the area (if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Description:

(4) Does the area or the remainder of the area (if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Description:

(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational scenic or historical value)?

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Description:

## Summary of Analysis

**Area Name and/or Number:** Willow Creek WY-030-14N96W36-2012

### Summary

Results of analysis:

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities of solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A
4. Does the area have supplemental values? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A

Check one:

\_\_\_\_\_ The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC).

\_\_\_X\_\_\_ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

**Prepared by:** Christopher D. Jones

Team members:

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**Reviewed by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dennis Carpenter, Field Manager

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_